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LEARNING TO READ

E. R. BOYCE

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LEARNING TO READ

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LEARNING TO READ

A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS
AND PARENTS

BY

E. R. BOYCE

Author of

"Play in the Infants' School"

"Infant School Activities," etc.



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INTRODUCTION

It is a simple but nevertheless constantly neglected truth that children have to do the "learning to read" and that teachers only foster the process.

It is equally true that before the art of the teacher can be used, little children have first to *understand* what all this reading business is about. They *do* understand if they find out that it is something fascinating to do; something which grown-ups like to do, and something which opens new ways of discovery and reveals the delight of stories.

Having understood, they *want* to be shown "how." It is then that they need the wisdom of a teacher who sympathises with their limitations and who knows best how to explain the knotty problems as they come along.

Some children find very few problems and some almost teach themselves. But there are others who have extreme difficulty and still others who give up the effort altogether and go through life with the minimum of reading skill. In rejoicing with the gifted children and in struggling with the least fortunate, teachers learn a good deal about

the large majority who achieve a fair standard after surmounting the usual difficulties. This little book attempts to bring together such knowledge and to indicate methods of learning and teaching which are the result of a varied experience as well as investigation into the difficulties of both children and teachers.

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WHAT IS READING ?

HUNDREDS of children grasp the significance of reading long before they come to school. A single example is that of two-year-old Jill who used to fetch the newspaper from the door mat each morning and give it to her father at the breakfast table. One day, she pointed to the surname which the newsagent had scribbled in the margin of the paper. "What's that?" she asked and was told the name of her father. Later on, she took paper and pencil and did a handsome scribble. "That's . . ." she announced, mentioning the name she had been told. Jill was well on the way to understand the meaning of the verb "to read."

Lots of children are familiar with their father's pre-occupation as he sits engrossed in the newspaper each morning. They associate his interest with those black patterns which cover the paper and which appear to speak to him from the rustling, white depths. They know that the paper speaks, for he makes remarks from time to time ; unintelligible remarks directed towards their mother.

Letters arrive, covered with masses of black wavy lines, and these also result in discussion. The children are often commanded, "Do not talk while I read my letters." Grown-ups seem to "do things" as a result of letters, they express annoyance, happiness or an unusual thoughtfulness. Sometimes, these gifts from the postman mean that something is going to happen to the children themselves. Holidays, parties or excursions are arranged through the agency of these little black patterns on white paper.

One day, a parent is observed making these marks with "ink" and "pen." The two-year-old grasps anything which resembles a pen and tries to make similar marks. Perhaps the mother notices this and suggests that the baby shall "write a letter to Grannie" and the child makes his ambitious scribble. Many children are given books at an early age. They turn the pages with varying degrees of attention and concentrate on the illustrations of familiar things. Soon they delight to name them. Some time later, probably after they have observed the type on newspapers and letters, they begin to pay casual attention to the printed word. This may happen sooner if a grown-up has taken the child on her knee to watch the pictures as she reads the rhymes aloud. Such episodes

are extremely pleasant to children. A beloved adult is giving you her undivided attention; you are both close together and sharing the same toy and she is making the most engaging little lilt or story for you. There, too, are the gaily coloured pictures which reveal themselves more distinctly and still more delightfully as the spoken words continue.

Such experiences have to be repeated and we hear children say to their dolls or imaginary companions, "I'll read you a story," and they squeeze themselves up in their chairs to make room for the doll or the teddy bear. With the book spread out, they repeat the rhymes they know or they make up absurd pieces of word-rubbish as they turn the pages.

Imperceptibly, the word "reading" becomes part of their everyday vocabulary, and from their experiences, they realise the connection between the little black marks, now called "writing," and speech. They know that the delight of a story is hidden between the lines of writing. Naturally they *want* to read. In many cases, they begin to discover a way for themselves.

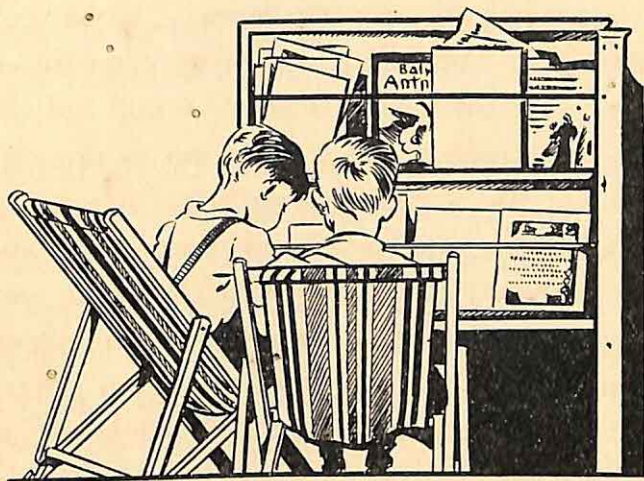
It is an easy but extremely important matter to give all children this happy introduction to reading. There are thousands who, while they meet with a variety of

experiences, miss this particular revelation. Their homes are without books and magazines, and reading is unimportant in the lives of their parents. Written communications are rare. Fathers have no leisure or inclination to sit over the news at breakfast-time. "Reading" does not enter their vocabulary until they come to school and then we often tend to make it a dull and difficult business by introducing it in the form of sounds; e.g., a, b, l, k, etc. What do such noises or hieroglyphics mean, either to children who have pored over picture books and had stories read to them, or to children whose speech is probably not made up of those sounds at all, and who hardly know how to talk, and still less what it means "to read?"

The fortunate children want more books and stories of the kind they have already met so that their interest grows until they demand help in learning to read.

For the rest, it is better to economise time and energy by surrounding them with a generous environment where they will have time to discover and enjoy the experiences of which they have been deprived. Not only will they learn what reading means, but they will build up pleasurable ideas about books. Such ideas are the only basis for the more formal lessons which must follow in the "learning to read" process.

THE NURSERY CLASS



THE BOOK CORNER

ALTHOUGH nursery education has nothing whatever to do with the formal teaching of the three Rs., it is very much concerned with giving children many kinds of experiences which form the basis of later learning. Every nursery class possesses picture books, but they are often tucked away on shelves where they are met only accidentally. If we consider the lack of books and stories in many homes, and then think how much they mean to the more happily

placed children, we shall begin by displaying them well and attractively on miniature shelves or on a low table kept especially as a "book table." We shall take the trouble to find the right sort of books; to keep them in repair, and to group a few little chairs and perhaps a mat and a couple of hassocks invitingly round the "book corner."

We shall sometimes sit down with the children to read them a rhyme or story from the pages of one of the books. Sometimes, we shall let the children observe as we take a volume from our own collection. They will cluster round as we find the story. We can take the tiniest one upon our knee as we do at home, and deal patiently with the interruptions and questions. We shall not mind if someone peers rather uncomfortably over our shoulder and whispers breathlessly "where does it say that?"

This kind of being "read to" and the freedom to use books as children wish is a good substitute for the lack of home experiences. "Looking at books" becomes a pleasurable and interesting activity and, without doubt, the very beginnings of learning to read in school.

It is as well to remember that reading and writing go hand-in-hand and that children who are not over-taught, write before they read. When they become interested

in type, or in the letters their parents receive, they try to make the funny marks for themselves. They often call this "drawing."

In the nursery class, therefore, the tools for scribbling, as well as those for drawing and painting, should be well and conveniently displayed. Sheets of plain paper, millboards, chalks, dusters, thick black and coloured pencils, complete the equipment. It is even possible to lay a large, discarded blackboard flat on the floor and to let the children scribble and "draw big," as they do on city pavements whenever they get the chance. Or a good-sized square of asphalt playground can be lined off and used as a legitimate "scribbling patch." We must of course remember that children's scribble is quite important to them and actually seems to them to resemble our ordered system of letters and spaces. There is no need to teach or correct at this stage.

THE FIVE YEAR OLDS

COMPARATIVELY few of our children, however, enjoy the advantages of a nursery class. Most of them come to school at the age of five and are plunged into the routine of school life. They begin almost at once to learn "reading" and to "do sums." It is a bewildering experience, both for those who come from homes where they have been protected and made to feel their importance, and for those who have spent most of their time freely exploring alleys and amusing themselves in and out of doors with practically no direction.

Since the publication of the 1937 edition of the Board of Education's "Handbook of Suggestions to Teachers," in which it is recommended that the school day of the five year olds "should be somewhat similar to that suggested for the Nursery School,"¹ teachers have tried to replace the usual routine by something which resembles an advanced nursery programme and yet has some of the characteristics of the classes for the older infants. A detailed description of such a class can be found in my book "Infant School Activities."²

¹ Page 95.

² "Infant School Activities," by E. R. Boyce. Nisbet.

The teachers' first concern is to break up the formality of the rows and rows of desks and to arrange them in groups. Floor mats are used just as they are in the nursery, and, if the room is crowded, some of the desks are removed entirely and mats are provided instead.

The second task is to arrange plenty of suitable materials where the children can reach them and help themselves. Thirdly, the time table is considerably modified in order to give the children plenty of time for activities which are educational, but which bring them together in groups and make for friendliness and natural behaviour.

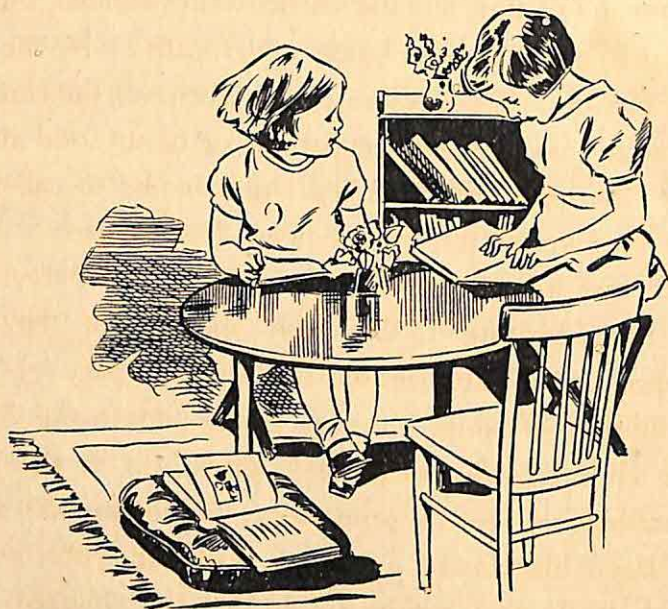
In small schools, where all the infants are taught in one room, some portion of it is dedicated to the use of the younger children and, while the others are practising their formal work, the newcomers are experimenting with toys and sand and becoming acquainted with their companions.¹

Such innovations help to make the beginnings of school life very happy and attractive. The children gain confidence and make friends with one another. They chatter and argue together: ask questions and give answers. This talking is, of course, as much preparation for reading as anything else. Every child needs to have some fluency

¹ See page 233 et seq. "Infant School Activities."

in speaking before he can recognise the words with which he meets in the simplest of reading books.

The Book Corner plays a very important part in the new classroom. It is possible to buy or make a folding



THE BOOK CORNER

book cupboard if the space is limited.¹ Besides picture books, it is valuable to have a collection of those little books which contain a series of pictures with a minimum of clear, explanatory type. The children invariably ask,

¹ Arnold & Sons, Leeds.

"What does this say?" and the reading interest is born. On page 84 there is a list of such books, but teachers can make their own collection of strong paper books, illustrated with cuttings. The older children do the cutting-out and pasting, and the teacher writes suitable (but not too much) script in bold letters underneath or by the side of the pictures. The books are used whenever the children are free to choose their occupations or in any odd times.

The "writing table" as the children like to call it, is also a very important arrangement. During each activity period, one group of desks or a couple of tables is put aside for "writing." This only means that they are equipped as the table in the nursery (see page 7) with the addition of some wooden letters and strong insets. Those children who want to "write" sit at the table and scribble or use the apparatus. Some teachers stand their large blackboard against a wall and put ready a box of chalks and a few dusters for the children who prefer to "write big." At this age, they usually introduce letters into their scribble and this indicates that they are sufficiently interested in reading to have noticed accurately some of the shapes.

Of course, it may be impossible to have anything but a traditional five-year-old classroom with a rather rigid

time table. This is a pity, especially when psychologists are proving to us how much harm "sitting still" does to small children and when such bodies as the Board of Education are encouraging teachers to organise a freer type of curriculum. However, even in the most formal classroom, reading need not be introduced through the dull sounds of letters. There can still be picture book periods and a choice of handwork, when attractive writing materials are displayed side by side with plasticine, bead-threading boxes, etc. Out-of-date wall-paper books provide good-sized sheets of plain paper which are not too large for an old-fashioned desk. During picture book periods, the children choose and change their books, chattering freely to each other as they look at the pictures.

Story-time can be still more fruitful if the children are allowed to move from their seats to make an informal group round the teacher. There will be some, even in a large class, who will be able to watch the words as the pages turn.

THE DAWN OF READING INTERESTS

DAY by day, reading experiences accumulate. Children continue to ask, "What does it say?" and words as well as letters are written spontaneously. The more enjoyable the experiences of reading in the home, the sooner will children show signs of wanting more definite help from a teacher. This is one reason why no one can say exactly when it is best to teach children to read. As a rule, children from poor homes need a much longer time with picture books and incidental experiences, but even among the more favoured children there are many who should not begin before their sixth or even their seventh birthday.

They all become more aware of words as they see more of the life around them. They notice names written up in huge letters upon hoardings and smaller ones on doors and handles. The sympathetic adult will be constantly translating these names into words: e.g., PUSH, PULL, HALT, SLOW, etc. This enthusiasm for collecting printed names begins to spread to names on shops, names on stations, names on buses, names on the packets

which appear on the breakfast table. Of course; this is not true reading, but it is another very important preliminary and shows that "reading" is something which already lives for the child and something which he has begun to associate with the unfolding life around him. This interest is usually a sign that some more definite teaching about reading would be welcome.

First Lessons.—Each teacher has to consider her particular class of children and then to decide for herself what form her first reading material shall take. For instance, in many classes there is a shop and it is therefore fitting that the children who play at shops will be interested in such labels as, OPEN; SHUT; EARLY CLOSING TO-DAY; as well as the names of the commodities and the name of the shop itself. They will find it vastly interesting to make up a story about themselves and their shop, dictating it to the teacher, who will make it permanent by writing it on large wall sheets. Day by day the story will be re-read and something added to it. The daily reading of these sheets and notices will provide the first definite reading lessons in this class.

In some classes, the children have organised a system of toy trains or they have planned a miniature bus service. It is a natural outcome that their teacher will

provide them with such notices as, GET YOUR TICKET HERE; STOP; GO; ROAD UP; GO ROUND THE OTHER WAY; ONE WAY STREET, etc. This interest also lends itself to the making of a story about, "Our Bus Service," or "Our Train."

Another class had their first reading lessons when such notices as PLEASE WIPE YOUR SHOES, and PLEASE RING, had appeared outside their playhouse. There are many ways of using the interests of children in the service of reading and, moreover, they are exactly those which prove most acceptable to the children themselves. The classes which are not fortunate enough to run shops and trains, can still make up a story about their own doings or about the adventures of some favourite story-book character, and add to it every day. This approach is especially suitable for children who are being taught at home. Country children are able to dictate stories about farm life and anything which concerns aeroplanes will be eagerly followed by all small boys.

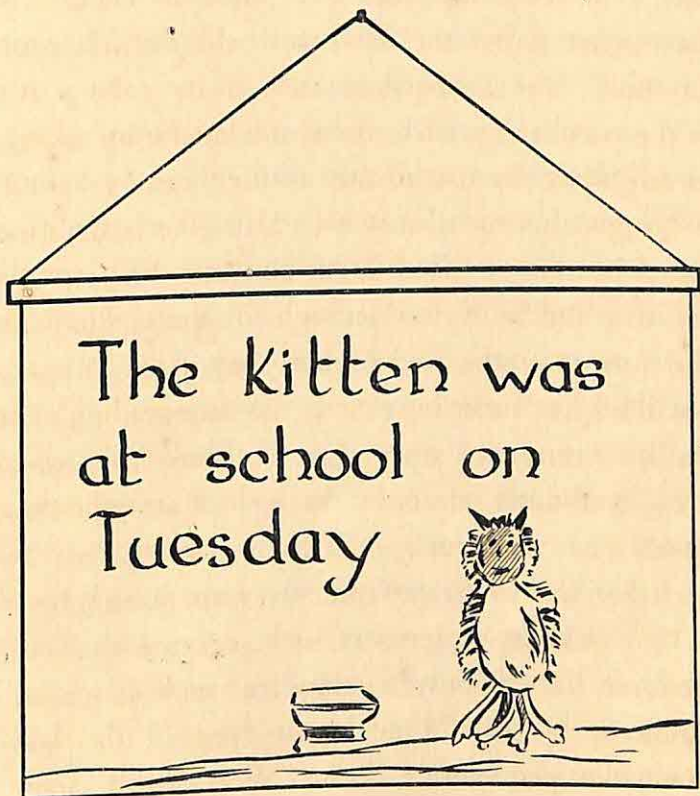
Sometimes the approach is made through a delightful nature table with its indoor garden and aquaria. In this case, the first reading games concern the names of the flowers, pets and plants, and the story is an account of the doings of one of the pets.

Small illustrated copies of all these stories are added to the book table and there the children who are sufficiently interested read and re-read them. All types of classes keep a "Little Daily Newspaper" with some particular piece of news suggested by a member of the class. The sheets are large and, while the children watch, the teacher writes the news with the thickest pencil she can find. She keeps their interest by calling attention to the peculiarities of some of the letters; by asking them to tell what she has already written and by letting them try to give her the next word. These sheets are often illustrated by one of the children and then they are clamped together and hung low enough for the children to stand and turn over the pages when they want to read them. Small books containing exactly the same reading matter and similar illustrations are put on the book table, where they are as constantly referred to as the little story books already mentioned. Of course, the news is read by the whole class each day, and every day some by-gone news is revised.

One class kept a series of such papers with their corresponding little books and they had such names as, "Our Book of Dolls," "Our House News" (this had to do with the playhouse); "Our Shop News," etc. Most teachers find that the news sheets become a medley of

items about home life, babies, birthdays, new toys and the usual events in the lives of children.

The names of the children themselves are very important in this approach to reading. They are used on such wall notices as, "Ted is the shopkeeper to-day" and



"Beryl can tidy the books this week." They come into the written stories and they are used as flash-card games. The children are shown cards, each bearing the name of one of them. After a few days, the teacher takes a handful of cards and shows one after another. When a child recognises his name, he calls out quickly, "Here I am!" Names appear also on individual belongings instead of the symbols of the nursery class.

Whatever the approach, the words used must *say* something to the children, who then realise from the beginning that the printed word has a meaning for each one of them. No other reading is anything but sheer memory recall or a kind of lip service, which betrays the children as soon as they are asked to study what they have read, or to find out something from the written page. It is sometimes suggested that this "reading for content" should be trained at about the age of seven. There is no need for such training if reading lessons are linked with child-like interests from the very beginnings. In fact, it is almost impossible to re-educate the children who have learned only to translate symbols into words without using their minds to understand the meaning contained in the symbols.

THE DISCOVERY OF WORDS

THIS pre-story book reading is a class activity. If possible, the children sit in a group round the teacher and the proceedings are as informal as space and numbers allow. They recognise and discuss the whole pattern of the phrase presented to them. For instance, in recording the weather, they read, "To-day is sunny," and there is no attempt to repeat the sentence word for word. The teacher does not even point out each word as they proceed, for this is likely to destroy both the reality and the rhythm. The same, or parts of phrases, occur again and again and the children are delighted with their own quick recognition, "Isn't it easy?" they exclaim. Although they are not actually reading, this feeling of achievement is both pleasant and valuable and still another step towards final success.

Some children soon discover that a certain part of a phrase corresponds to one word-sound. A number of common words are bound to be repeated in the various stories or notices and then these quick children begin to murmur, "That's 'we'," or "I'll show you 'shop'." If asked, they will at once show which is "sunny" and which is "to-day." With a little help, they will be able to name quite a number of words. The ease with which

many children do this, must not blind us to the fact that a large number of other children need some help in discriminating between individual words. This is where we learn from backward children.

It is not necessary to spend long on this stage, providing we do not press the matter before the children are ready; for the end is quickly achieved through various means which appeal to the children and which avoid any sort of single word emphasis. If a child continues to be confused, it is better to leave him alone and to return to the work after an interval. Such confusion usually means that the child in question is being taught too young. Here are a few simple games which have proved successful over and over again. A couple of them are played with the whole class for a few minutes every day. In a very short time, all but the very dumbest realise the significance of the word apart from the sentence. Remember that we are not teaching them to recognise words; but only to separate them and to realise that reading is made up of words.

Here are a few simple games:

1. Cover up individual words and let the children find out which they are.
2. Games beginning, "Come out and find me the word . . ."

3. Holding up cards with single words which appear on the sheet. The game is to find another like it and to say the word-sound.

Flash Card Drill with single words.—

1. *Children's Christian names.*

They are boldly printed on white cards. As each child recognises his name, he calls out "Here I am!" (see page 18).

2. *Look and Do Games.*

This series contains things which can be done with the hands; e.g., up, down, shake, twist, push, wave, etc.

Or they may be things which can be done with the head; e.g., nod, shake, turn, laugh, etc.

Or such activities as stand, sit, hop, run, clap, etc.

The fourth game is more complicated and should be introduced only to children who are successful with the first three Examples:

"Close your eyes."

"Close your hand."

"Put out your hand."

"Put up your hand," etc.



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The letters on flash cards should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high. White cardboard is best.

First the children are told carefully what is written on each card. Then the game is played, each card being exposed for a shorter period as the children become skilled. It is useful to have the word written on the back of each card so that the teacher can recognise it quickly and avoid twisting the card about.

3. *Naming Games.*

Labels are made for objects in the room and are shown to the children. The first child to recognise the one shown, puts it by the object without speaking. At the end of the game, any incorrect positions are rectified by other children. The labels are collected by one of the children and the game begins again. There is no value whatever in labelling things in the classroom and letting the labels remain indefinitely, because the children become too used to them to notice them.

These games need not all be used for one class, although the more varied the attack, the livelier the lessons and the easier it is to retain the attention and interest of the children.

PROGRESS—LEARNING TO RECOGNISE WORDS

LET us imagine a class of children with different degrees of intelligence, about $5\frac{1}{2}$ years old, and able to discover single words from sentences and phrases. (This has sometimes been called the "word-conscious stage.")

The next concern of the teacher is to make sure that the children know the proper word-sounds when they see them away from familiar phrases and pictures. They should be able to *see* the words so that they can tell them from others when the story or phrase is not there to guide them.

We can learn a great deal about the teaching of this stage if we thoughtfully consider again those children who almost teach themselves. At home with their picture books, they have constantly followed such rhymes as, "Little Miss Muffett," "Little Bo-peep," "Little Boy Blue," without noticing the different words. They know by the whole shape, or by the length, or by some "funny" outline, which one is which; or perhaps they refer to the illustration on the opposite page. Then, one

day, they take up a new story book and *see* the word "little." The child spontaneously sounds "little" as she sees it. This new skill develops rapidly. Such words as "table," "rabbit," "aeroplane," and "house" are among the first words to be actually READ, for reading it is. This practice in word recognition continues to function unconsciously. Parts of words which "stick up" or "stick down;" the dot over the i; "tails;" all such details help the children to recognise familiar spoken words. The unknown ones are boldly guessed at, partly through a glance at a picture and partly by suggestion from the text. The day soon comes when the child discovers, "I can read."

Until this happens, words seem to all children as oblong patterns of confused markings. But the more attentive they become to these patterns (because they are interested) the quicker they are to notice their outstanding features and peculiar shapes. These shapes are associated with the word-sounds which are remembered because of the look of the words and the meaning of the sounds for children. "Little" is a very, very easy word to remember. Its shape cannot be confused with that of any other word and its content is full of meaning for little children in a big world of adults. "Arms," "face," "legs," "mouth," "dinner," are other easy-to-remember words. Long

words are also easy provided that they convey meaning ; e.g., elephant, aeroplane, rhinoceros, frightened. Their very length gives them a definite character which helps children to recall their sounds.

These clever children are quick to notice differences and almost as quick to notice similarities. They have good vocabularies; they can follow a story and know what ought to come next, and so they get themselves over the difficulties when they meet with little words, which look very much alike.

It is a very different matter when we are dealing with the slower children or even with those of average ability. They *do* recognise words on the same principle; e.g., by shape and outstanding peculiarities; but they do not recognise them so easily or quickly. They need to have their attention called to certain details; they profit considerably if we help them to remember by definitely pointing out the shape of a word. When a teacher is writing the news on the sheet, she says, "Look, this word begins with a tall letter and ends with a curly one." There is a good deal of wisdom in the Decroly plan of training children to make mental pictures of the look of words before they write them.¹ In this exercise,

¹ The Decroly Class by Mlle Hamaide.

the children consciously spend a few seconds in visualising words, then a curtain covers up the teacher's writing and the children immediately write as much as they can remember of the look of words. The slower the child, the more practice does he need in memorising the appearance of words and the more he needs our help. Very backward children can be given sand-paper words to feel before they write.

It is a good plan to introduce the letter names during the discussions on word-shapes. Nowadays, children do not learn their A.B.C. as part of their reading lessons, although they still delight in alphabet picture books. Instead, we mention the names conversationally as we explain the characteristics of the word under consideration. Perhaps the word is "look." "This tall, straight letter is 'l'," remarks the teacher, giving it the alphabetical name. "This end letter has its arm up and its leg kicks out. That's 'k'."

In a very short time, children recognise the letters and respond quickly to the suggestion: "Try to tell me *all* the letters in this word." Before long, we can ask them to look at a word and to spell it.

This is a great help to children who recognise words more easily by hearing them spelt than by scrutinising their shape.

There is no harm, either, in mentioning the sounds of some of the letters, but there should be no attempt at phonic training yet. The observant teacher will find that some children try hard to discover a word by sounding either the first or last letters. These children profit immensely if given encouragement along their own lines. As the letter name is given to the class, the teacher adds: "It sounds . . . as you can hear in" Sometimes she asks: "Try to sound this word."

The teacher who provides the right sort of help at this stage will soon have the majority of the children recognising a number of familiar words, but she must remember that they will not be able to attack unknown words unless they belong to the intelligent group we have already considered. They will also be puzzled by similar words which have some insignificant difference. They will hesitate between "was" and "saw," "no" and "on," "put" and "but," "were" and "went," etc. As a matter of fact, they often suppose that these words have been muddled up by careless adults. A six-year-old recently pounced on the word "saw," which he met soon after reading "was." "Look, there are two the same here. They've turned them up the wrong way!" he exclaimed. This lack of discrimination between words

of like appearance is often at the root of backwardness in the Junior School child.

In planning ways and means of teaching this stage, we must therefore bear in mind first how the children learn to recognise words and secondly why they fail to do so. Each teacher has to decide which words should be recognised first. It is wise to look ahead and to choose a series of reading books in advance. Then the first book of the series will need to be scrutinised for its content of utility words and for its key words. These together will make up the words the children will need to recognise when reading their first story book.

Utility words are those which enable children to read connected sentences of a simple sort ; e.g., " and," " the," " we," " are," " but," " have," " shall," " she," " he," etc. The key words are mostly nouns and verbs and these depend upon the sort of stories in the reading book. In the story of " The Three Bears," the key words will be " porridge," " bear," " walk," " chair," " bed," etc., etc.

In choosing suitable books, the teacher should remember that the key words must be those which are commonly used in speech by the majority of children. There are published lists which give this information.¹

¹ A Reading Vocabulary, by A. I. Gates.

Then the total of all the words in a first story book for a child under six, should not be much greater than 100 words and these should be repeated throughout the book and the following books. The repetition should, however, be spread over the whole book and not limited to a number of like phrases on a few consecutive pages. A word of warning must be given about those first story books which are written to give practice in phonetics and word-building. They are quite unsuitable for this more psychological approach to reading. They contain far too many similar words which confuse the slower children and, in some cases, are poor in ideas yet overburdened with uninteresting key words. If, however, there is a supply of such books in the school, they can be used later as supplementary readers (see page 77), and to give practice in word-building (see page 70).

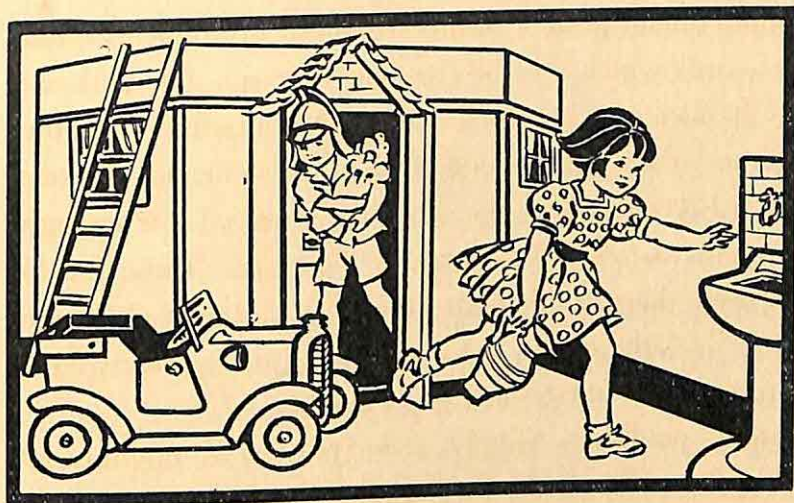
Once the reading book has been decided upon, a plan can be evolved by which the children will learn to recognise the words they will meet in their first story book.

It is a common practice now for teachers to make "wall stories" which contain most of these words. Pictures are mounted on good sized sheets of cardboard with an explanatory phrase printed boldly underneath. There may be nine or ten such posters and altogether they

should contain quite a number of both utility words and key words which will be required later on. The children like the idea of a big book "in spread-out-pages" on the wall and they get a good deal of spontaneous practice in word-recognition if the sheets are arranged low enough for them to touch the words as they pass. They like to have each sheet numbered so that they can refer to "page" Where wall space is limited, these posters have to replace the stories previously used.

Some publishers supply these posters as preliminary material for use with their reading books. *The Activity Scheme* (Messrs. Macmillan and Co., Ltd.) begins by introducing ten wall pictures, each with four explanatory phrases which can be used in any order preferred by the teacher. There are 40 phrases and about 100 words. As a matter of fact, these phrases contain all the vocabulary which the children will meet in "My First Story Book," the first of the reading books of the *Activity Scheme*.

If the teacher prefers to make her own posters, she will need Indian ink and a fairly wide parcel pen-nib. The script is then bold and clear. It is better to have separate phrases on cardboard strips which can be clipped underneath the pictures at different times, than to show five or six lines all at once. She begins by introducing each poster



WALL PICTURE NO. 5—ACTIVITY SCHEME

separately to the whole class and then telling them a story about the picture. In the *Activity Scheme*, the same children appear throughout the ten posters, so that the teacher has no difficulty in creating a serial story and in keeping up the interest of her class. It is always profitable to use the precise words of the phrase to be taught while telling the story. For instance, one of the wall pictures in the *Activity Scheme* illustrates three children who are pretending that their play house is on fire. The phrase underneath is, "Fire, fire!" Naturally, as the teacher tells the story of the game, she impressively repeats the words of the small boy who calls out to the rest, "Fire, fire!"

The children play the usual games of finding the individual words, but the reading of the phrases should never be slowed down for the purpose of pointing. Reading at this stage should proceed phrase by phrase, not word by word. If any guide seems necessary, the teacher can let a finger slip easily along beneath the words as the children repeat them. We must do nothing which may interfere with rhythmical natural reading, for this smoothness helps the children as much as anything to read intelligently and to make bold efforts to translate unknown words.

The slower children can sometimes play a game together with the teacher as leader. She takes the whole series of phrase cards and lays them anywhere on the floor mats. The children walk round and in between them, to select any one they like and bring it to read to her. She helps each one whenever they fail to remember and then encourages each one to return to the unknown phrases and to try again.

The key words are easily remembered and instead of labouring at the utility words which give so much trouble when separated from their context, it is better to practise recognition through games which encourage the children to scrutinise the striking characteristics and general look of the words.

CLASS WORK IN RECOGNITION OF UTILITY WORDS

THE words are separated from the familiar background of the posters and made into several series of games with flash cards. Particular care has to be taken in grouping them. If there are 50 words, they should be grouped into 4 sets, and the cards in each set should show words which are dissimilar in shape and length. The study of backward children has taught us that it is easier for all children at this particular stage to remember *different* looking words, and much more difficult to remember words which are grouped together because they are alike. A good series might be made up of:

to, your, the, girl, come, will, mother, baby, her.
There are both utility and key words in this selection. A bad series might contain the following:

do, to, go, got, top, now, out, pot, etc.

When making their own, teachers should remember that the letters should be plain, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches high and without too much space between them.

The *Activity Reading Scheme* provides sets of flash cards especially planned on this principle. Each set is numbered and the words are printed in small type on the

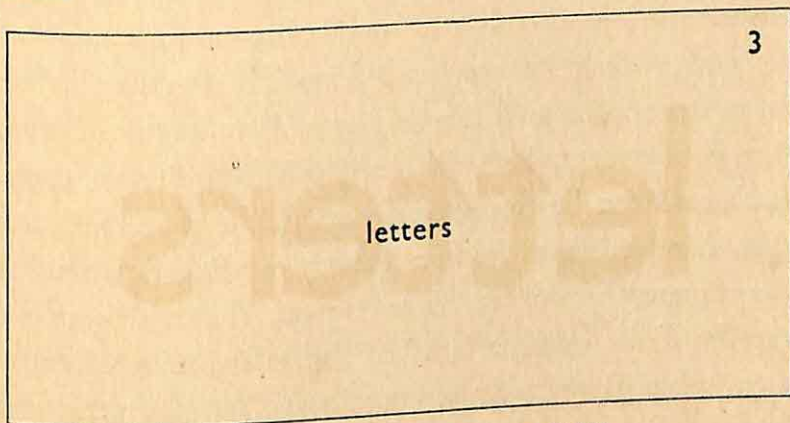
reverse side in order that the game goes smoothly. It is important that these cards are kept at the eye level of the children, who should be grouped round the teacher instead of spread about a large classroom. Each card is exposed for only as many seconds as there are letters. This is really quite a short time. Nothing is gained by waiting for a slow child to answer; it is better for a quicker child to respond and for the first one to repeat the word and make a conscious effort to memorise it. The rate of play should become faster as the children show more skill. However well planned and attractive the material, it will not meet with the maximum success unless the games are played vigorously and are enjoyed by both teacher and children.



letters

FLASH CARD AS SHOWN TO CHILDREN

After the first few practices, it is possible to tell those children who are blessed with retentive memories for word pictures, and those who are slow to retain the images. The former will, of course, become the "good readers" of the class. The skill of the teacher is displayed, however, in the way she manages to keep the confidence and interest of the slower children. It is easy to organise groups for this practice; the quick children will need a few days' practice before they are ready for the next stage. The slow children will gain by having a few minutes' intensive practice twice a day for as long as they need. Between these two groups there will probably be two more groups who will also work at their particular rates.



TEACHER'S VIEW OF FLASH CARD

Small duplicates, arranged in similar sets, can be left with other individual games and the children can copy them or play "flash cards" with each other.

These flash cards are also used as test material. When a teacher is fairly certain that some children are ready for another stage, she tests them individually by asking them to tell her the words quickly as she turns the cards over.

READING AND WRITING

It is a good plan to give each child a small book of plain paper and every day to encourage him to choose any phrase displayed on the wall posters, to write it and then illustrate it. As the days go on, he has a story book of his own which he can read himself. The large flash cards can also be used for writing and reading combined. It will, however, be valuable if children do not copy. Each card can be displayed for a couple of seconds and then removed, the children quickly writing down what they remember of it. The slower children improve rapidly if the exercise is taken for a few minutes every day, when they make a conscious effort to retain the picture of the word in order to write it correctly. The

card must not be exposed for more than a few seconds; it is very easy for children's attention to wander and then the image is lost.

At this stage, the Little Daily Newspaper disappears and the children begin to keep their own News Books or Diaries. Home-made books of plain paper with brown or wall-paper covers are used and thick black pencils.

When the activity is first introduced, the children decide to write about a topic familiar to all. They illustrate *first*. Then the teacher writes the words they have suggested. It is a splendid opportunity for helping the children (especially the slow ones) to notice the peculiarities of different words. The remarks on page 25 concerning letter-names and sounds are important in connection with this exercise.

The teacher finishes writing; the children read aloud and then they try hard to visualise the words. "Now write all you can remember," she says as she covers up the words (see *The Decroly Class* by Mlle Hamaide).

The quick children can soon be left to write whatever they like without guidance from the blackboard. This is the beginning of written English. The rest work in a group, led by the teacher, until they are ready to join the others.

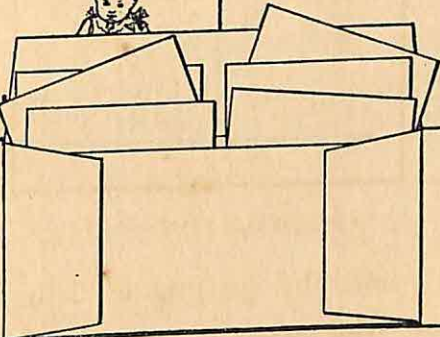
INDIVIDUAL WORK

Susan Ware			
Matching Cards			
1	~~2~~	3	~~4~~
5	6	7	8
~~9~~	10	11	12

RECORD CARD, NO. 1

NOTHING is gained by prolonging flash card drill for those children who know the words. It is better for them to get to work independently. Incidentally, this leaves the teacher free to take the rest in smaller groups and to give them the attention they need.

Individual apparatus takes the form of silent reading

I am	
Ann	
	a postman
	
Jim	
	a shopman
	
baby doll	
	
	
6 _A	

FORM OF MATCHING CARD, SET A, OF THE
"ACTIVITY READING SCHEME"

material which enables children to *think* the proper sound when they see a certain word; thus getting the connection between sight and meaning and leaving out the speaking.

a postman	Ann
a shopman	Jim
a carman	baby doll

BACK OF MATCHING CARD SHOWN OVERLEAF

Suitable material is not difficult to make, but satisfactory material can be bought cheaply enough. The difficulty is to find material which uses the particular words and

ideas needed for a particular set of books.

The individual exercises which are supplied with the *Activity Reading Scheme* use repeatedly those words which have appeared already on the wall stories and flash cards and which will appear later in the story books. There are ten cards, each one providing the children with three exercises. The first is to match the word to the picture with the word by the side. The second is to match the word to the word without the help of the picture. The last is to use a phrase which appears at the top of each card and to make up a sentence by adding words from the rest of the card.

Each card is boldly numbered and the same number appears on the back of the small matching cards. If they become disordered, any child can sort them into their right envelopes. Independence is encouraged if all the children keep a record of the cards they have successfully completed.

THE WORK BOOK

SOME children will soon be ready for the next piece of individual work. In the case of the *Activity Scheme*, this consists of an attractive "Work Book" which can be used in one of two ways.

I am the mother.
I am the father.
I am the baby.



I am the baby.
I am the dog.
I am the mother.



I am the dog.
I am the mother.
I am the baby.



Children draw a line under the sentence which tells about the picture;
then colour the pictures.

Each page consists of something to read and something to do; e.g., colouring, cutting, or drawing, or perhaps all three. The "doing" will not be correctly performed unless the reading matter has been understood. In this particular work book, all the words used are those which the children have already met, and this means that they can work quite independently. The teacher is only necessary when the job is finished, or if someone finds unexpected difficulty.

Each page is perforated, so that when an exercise is finished, the page can be taken from the book and the plain, reverse side, used for any exercise which the teacher likes to suggest.

It is perfectly obvious that such a work book not only gives practice in word-recognition, but begins at once to carry on the training in reading for meaning. It is also the best and quickest method of testing the child's ability.

"My First Work Book" can, however, be used after the story book has been read. Here again it is a test to discover if a child has already read and understood the book, or if he has just repeated the words to himself. Where individual reading is encouraged, the work book solves the problem of testing every child every day.

Some teachers favour the work sheet, but it is almost impossible to keep up a supply for a large class. Where a work book is especially written as an accompaniment to a reading book, it is an economy to use one for each child.

GROUP WORK—CLASS ORGANISATION

THE class of forty-five infants, approaching reading through games and stories, eventually separates into groups. There is Group 1, perhaps working through the work book. Group 2 are busy with matching cards. Group 3 are still playing games for word-recognition, and Group 4, possibly the newcomers or, maybe, the slowest children, are occupied with the discovery of books and writing materials.

If the children have been trained from the beginning to be independent, these four groups can work simultaneously and the teacher can move from her lesson with Group 2 to scrutinise the work of Group 3 and then to supervise Group 4. This independence may be acquired in the nursery class or through the play activities and informal five-year-old programme, or these reading activities may be the means of beginning this much needed character training.

The reader may wonder what will happen to Group 2 when their short lesson is over. There is no problem if the class works on the new type of time table where there appears one or two long periods called "3R. Activities." It has been found artificial and wasteful to divide the daily programme for young children into short sections dealing specifically with "reading," "writing" and "number." The long periods leave teachers free to organise the practice of the 3Rs. in any way which seems to them intelligent and valuable for the particular groups of children with whom they are concerned at any one time.

There are also many things for children to do in all classrooms, and they should know how to get things for themselves and how to use them. Early number work takes the form of shopping, measuring, weighing, play with scoring games, etc. The class is divided into about eight groups according to activity involved; e.g., shopping, bagatelle, quoits, skittles, measuring and so on. At the beginning of the longer 3R. period (usually an hour) the teacher tells the children which group is due to play with one particular game. By the time the class has reached the various stages in reading practice, they have also learned to carry on about these number activities.

They are trained to go from their reading practice to a number game, and from that to any one of the other activities displayed in the classroom. There are pattern-making games, scrap-books to be made, jig-saws to be solved, and there is always the inviting book corner.

We will imagine that Susan is nearly six and that she has advanced to the second reading group. She is one of the forty members in a class. About 9.30 a.m., Susan's teacher calls the children to her and writes on the black-board at the same time reading aloud:

FRIDAY'S WORK

Reading

Group 1. Go on with your work book.

Group 2. Do 3 matching cards.

Group 3. Come to me.

Next

Play your number games.

Then

Choose something quiet to do.

The teacher re-reads the notice to be sure that all the children understand.

Each group knows which number game to go to, and on this particular day, Susan has already discovered that she is to be a customer at the shop. She first takes a matching card which she has been told to do again as she was not successful yesterday. She works through it, but, having completed her sentences, she sees that her teacher is still busy with Group 3. She knows that she must not interrupt yet, so she gets another matching card, and when she has finished, she puts the two aside while she does the third. By this time the teacher is free and ready to test any finished work. Susan correctly reads the sentences she has written and at a glance the teacher can see that she has correctly matched the cards. Triumphantly, three more numbers are crossed off her record card and she tells her friend in the next seat that she has only two more to get right.

Then she takes out her paper purse where she keeps her cardboard money, and her shopping book. The shopkeeper is behind the counter. (He is allowed to do his reading practice at the shop and so be ready for his customers.)

After some consideration, Susan buys several toys and offers a shilling in payment. She counts her change

and then waits for her goods to be wrapped. Then she takes them to her place and arranges them along the desk. If you look over her shoulder while she writes in her shopping book you will see something like this :

FRIDAY

(copied from work notice on blackboard)

1 peg doll 2d. (Susan had to refer to the price list to find how to write "peg.")
 "Doll" is a word she has met on the wall story.

2 boats 4d. (Again she referred to the price list.)

2 flags 2d. (Again she referred to the price list.)

— 5 —	— 8d. —
-------------	---------------

I gave Jim 1s. and he gave me 4d. back.

Before she made this last effort Susan counted out her change and before she could write "back" she spoke to her teacher who wrote the word for her on the black-

board. The other words she had met already and remembered from flash cards and her individual work.

The shopping book was scrutinised by the shopkeeper who boldly wrote "right" across the page and then Susan left her seat for the vacant chair in the book corner. The book she wanted was there. It was a small news book which she had illustrated herself. If there had been time, she might have tried a jig-saw next, but it was 10.30 a.m. and time for a wash and a drink of milk.

In small classes, or where children are being taught at home, it is not difficult to plan "work for the day" to suit each child.

Envelopes, labelled with their names, are pinned to the wall and, each morning, these are searched for the work cards which direct the practice and activities of each child during the 3R. period.

FIRST STORY BOOKS

It is an exciting moment when a group of children is ready for the first story book. The event is very important and it should be made much of. Moreover, the children's enthusiasm should not be allowed to diminish because of too many difficulties. The first experience should be successful; they should be able to read through each story without any serious obstacles which might give them the feeling that, after all, they are not so good at reading and perhaps it is rather a hard thing to have to do. This is easy enough when the intelligent children tackle their first books. For the slower ones, it is better to delay the use of books and give them plenty of practice with preliminary material to ensure success when they do begin. Of course, the delay should not be so long that they feel a sense of failure because they are the only ones "not yet on to books."

Nor is there any reason why all the children should begin to read from the same book. If the teacher has time and patience, she will probably make a few slim volumes herself. She will use the familiar words but put

less sentences on a page, and the whole book will be only about six pages long. The backward children are delighted to have read one of these books and their success encourages them to further effort. They are ready for Book 1 of the chosen series when they have mastered about six of the teacher's little books.

With a small group of slow children, it is worthwhile considering the interests of each individual. A six-year-old boy who is fond of animals and farm life, responded readily to an old-fashioned story-book about a visit to a farm after half-a-dozen modern primers had completely failed to interest him. The timid, inarticulate child has often some enthusiasm which provides a hint of the sort of book which will help him over his first reading difficulties. The best possible is the one written for him by the teacher herself, with a limited, simple vocabulary. It can be illustrated with drawing or paper cuts by the child himself.

There are people who assert that any book will do for the first reading experiences. This is emphatically not so. The first story books are the most important of all. A dull book about unfamiliar things and with an unusual vocabulary is no stimulus to go on reading. A dull *looking* book is also not an invitation to read. Teachers

need to exercise careful judgment in their choice of first books. Clear print, bold, attractive pictures, pages unbroken by "lessons," and more important than anything else, interesting material and words and phrases which hold meaning for small children.

"My First Story Book," the first book of the *Activity Reading Scheme*, has been written with these ideas in mind. The children in the book play as all children play and their activities include those which are common in many Infant Schools: house keeping, shop play, traffic games, dressing up and having parties, are all introduced and the children in the book talk as ordinary children talk every day. There is a real story-book look about the book which appeals much more than a primer. The type and its arrangement have been planned to meet the needs of little children who are just beginning to acquire eye movements which accompany reading habits, and which, from the first, should be easy and flowing.

It has also been said that sentences in the first story books should be short. They certainly should not be long, but the very short sentence often destroys the rhythm in reading. The idea is to encourage natural, fluent reading by well-balanced, rhythmical phrases, each of which expresses an idea to which the minds of the

Susan Ware			
My First Story Book			
Page			
~~1~~	~~9~~	17	25
~~2~~	~~10~~	18	26
~~3~~	~~11~~	19	27
~~4~~	~~12~~	20	28
~~5~~	~~13~~	21	29
~~6~~	~~14~~	22	30
~~7~~	~~15~~	23	31
~~8~~	~~16~~	24	32

RECORD CARD, NO. 2

children can respond. "My First Story Book" endeavours to comply with this ideal.

There may be quite a ritual about the distribution of the first books. Each child needs some sort of loose cover to protect his copy, a record card and a line guide. The record card shows the name of the book and leaves sufficient space for a child to record which page she has read. Some children who make their own, like to fill the card with numbers representing pages and these they cross off as they read.

The reverse side is kept for the teacher's record of any words which the child cannot easily remember. The line guide is a piece of cardboard about 4 in. by 1 in. which the children lay under each line and move down as they read. Pointing must be avoided and these guides prevent the lines of type appearing to run into each other and so confusing the children.

It is an economy for a small group to begin reading their books with the teacher, for then she can indicate the various ways in which they can attack a problem. For instance, she suggests that they glance at a picture to give the clue if they forget a word. She can see that they all understand that they should come and ask a word rather than pass over it and miss the meaning of the whole. (It is invariably better to give them words straight away at this stage unless they can use their common sense and get them either from the context, a picture, or by glancing at the wall story.)

She also encourages them to guess from the context. Many teachers are shocked at the idea of guessing words. If all children had the same capacity for guessing, the teaching of reading would present far fewer difficulties. The self-taught child begins by guessing more than he reads. But this means that he is using his background

and intelligence to get something meaningful for himself from this mass of strange print. It is the stumbling and fumbling for the exact word which slows down reading into useless word-barking.

"Make a guess," is one of the most sensible suggestions a teacher can make to the beginner in reading.

When the teacher is satisfied that these children know how to handle books and what to do in difficulties, it is better to allow each one to proceed at his own rate. This means, that each day Susan will consult her record card and continue to read from where she left off the day before. She will read alone and probably aloud to herself and, if she cannot find out a particular word, she will go from her seat and ask the teacher or a friend. During the times set aside for the practice of the 3Rs., the teacher will listen to Susan as she reads a page which she has already mastered that morning.

When the slower children are ready for books, they are often happier reading together in a group. Half-a-dozen together are able to give each other confidence and the teacher can help the whole group in such a way as would be impossible if each one was taken separately. Every possible sort of attack has to be made with these children, but the secret of final success depends upon

sustaining their interest and allowing them to feel that they are progressing. They must never guess that they are "poor readers" or they will soon decide that the whole business is too hard for them. If teachers had a little more courage and less attachment to tradition, they would be content to leave the backward children with their picture books and games until they reached the age of six or even seven. A great deal of wasted energy would be saved and the children would learn quicker and more effectively.

THE USE OF SUPPLEMENTARY READERS

It is a great advantage if the first book can be followed by other small books which repeat the same vocabulary but in a different setting. Not only do the children then get plenty of extra practice in the recognition of their basic reading vocabulary, but they are able to read their supplementary books fluently and to enjoy the story. The good habits already begun have a chance to become more established.

It is extremely hard to find books with a simple enough vocabulary, and even when they are found, they may

Susan Ware

Little Books

- 1 Baby's Bath
- 2 The Doll's Party
- 3 Robin's House
- 4 Robin's Dog

RECORD CARD, NO. 3

not contain the words which the children have already met. To meet this need, the *Activity Reading Scheme* follows its first reading book with four short supplementary readers, the vocabulary of which is strictly confined to that in "My First Story Book." As Susan finishes her book, she receives another record card (see above), and one of the "Little Books." There is no need for her teacher to check the complete reading of these simple books but, as each one is finished, she tests

her by asking her to read various phrases and perhaps a page here and there. Then Susan gives herself a mark and proceeds to the next "Little Book."

The book table is still important. Copies of the "Supplementary Readers," picture books, home-made scrap books and small copies of the class newspaper, etc. should be attractively displayed. Each week someone is chosen to keep the books tidy and such notices as the following are displayed near the table.

See if your hands are clean
before you touch the books.

Susan is librarian this week.

There are three new books today.
Can you find them?

The Book Table is used during the 3R. practice period and during any time when the class is not working with the teacher.

MY SECOND STORY BOOK

WHEN a group of children have successfully mastered "My First Story Book" and the four "Little Books," they are taken everyday for a short lesson when they are introduced to the second series of wall pictures. Their individual work will consist of making and illustrating their own story books from the new phrases.

In a few days, they will begin flash card drill with the second series of words. This again will be a short group lesson, taken while the rest of the class are working at books or individual exercises. Where a really informal class is possible, it is a good plan to let this group select flash cards for themselves and to match them by the correct word on the wall pictures; then to write the word and say it to the teacher. This means that perhaps ten children are walking quietly round the room while the teacher is helping another group and while others are working in their seats.

Individual exercises with matching cards give the same three activities as those for "My First Story Book,"

and they follow as soon as the children can recognise a good many of the new utility and key words. Next, comes "My Second Work Book," which the children can use without help as it contains only those words which the children have already learned. It is more suggestive than "My First Work Book," for the enlarged vocabulary gives wider scope for individual activity. Finally there comes "My Second Story Book."

This book repeats the vocabulary from the first book and adds the second hundred words which the children have learnt through the various methods used in the preliminary exercises. The reading of Book 2 should be as easy and successful as Book 1, and the children should keep a similar record card.

SUPPLEMENTARY READERS, SET 2

BEFORE progressing to a third book, the children should read half-a-dozen or so short books with a vocabulary drawn from their first two story books. It is easier to find books for this stage, but if they are provided with a particular reading scheme, it is a great advantage and economy to use them.

Numbers 5 to 10 of the "Little Books" of the *Activity*

Reading Scheme contain only the reading vocabulary of "My First and Second Story Books" and are therefore the ideal supplementary readers to follow Book 2 of the Series.

The children read them easily and need not refer to the teacher for unknown words. The "things to do" at the end of each book test their ability to read for meaning and keep them profitably occupied while other groups are absorbing the teacher's attention.

Here is Susan's Record Card for this stage:

Susan Ware

Little Books

5 A coat for a doll

6 A box Shop

7 Mother's Letter

8 Mother's First Story

9 The Stick Children

10 The Paper Dolls

She has read and understood two long story books and her ten little books. She likes reading, and although she is not one of those children to whom reading comes most easily, she feels that she is successful and wants to get on to more and more books. She is on the threshold of her lessons in phonics!

PHONICS OR NO PHONICS?

CONTROVERSY rages round the question of the conventional system of phonetic training. Hundreds of children, learning to read at home, are never taught sounds or sound combinations. There are teachers of large classes in elementary schools who find that they can teach children to read successfully without sounds. And we have reliable authority for saying that no matter what conventional system of sounds we teach as a phonic alphabet, it is always at least 50 per cent wrong!

On the other hand, there are many good experienced teachers who achieve "excellent results" by teaching reading from phonics. Of course, we have to beware of "results." The only true result should be that children read to obtain meaning from printed signs. Too often the results are described as excellent when the children are merely successful in translating visible signs into meaningless words.

Only a study of children themselves will help us to get the matter clear. Even then, we have to remember

that a great deal of experiment and observation is still necessary before anyone can say the last word about the teaching of anything to small children. We have hardly begun to discover just how they look at our grown-up efforts to educate them.

If we consider the children who have almost taught themselves at home, we shall at least have something to guide us. Once they have discovered that they can read, reading becomes an established part of their play and they often prefer a story book to a jig-saw puzzle or to a romp. As their reading widens they begin to meet unusual words which do not normally occur in their conversations and which they are unable to guess. These words may have no meaning for them, yet without them they may not be able to understand the story they are trying to read. At the same time, there is a large increase in the total number of words which they can read and, because of this, they meet with more which show the same broad characteristics as others which they know and yet cannot be translated. Can they continue to teach themselves?

Of course they often refer to adults who may be near, but this is a slow method even if grown-ups are always at hand and willing to be worried. They do, as a matter

of fact, work out some system for themselves. They notice the details of words more and more, they begin to separate the word parts and even the letter forms. They notice word parts which are similar. In fact they begin by analysing unknown words into parts of words which may be known or guessed at. They first detect the parts which they know and blend them together. Sometimes this makes the total word for them; sometimes a sort of word is produced which suggests the right one. If this method does not work, they resort to sounding single letters. How do they know the sounds of the letters? They have come to their own conclusions through accumulated reading experiences.

I have recently visited a large number of schools and have asked to be introduced to any young children who are reading fluently without being taught. "Have you told him anything about phonics?" I ask, and am usually assured that no word sounding has yet been practised in the class. I get the child to attempt to read from my newspaper or from a book which is quite beyond his understanding. I watch and listen intently to every attempt he makes to unravel long, difficult words. In each case, the child says to himself unhesitatingly those parts of the word which he recognises because they have

occurred in easier words. For the rest, he sounds out the symbols exactly as if he had been trained to do so and then combines the parts.

Many teachers have noticed that children who have been trained to read whole words and phrases will sound out initial letters in order to unravel a word which baffles them. There have also been lengthy and very careful experiments carried out in order to ascertain which are the best methods of teaching reading. One striking result of these important investigations is to prove that, although teachers use different methods, children themselves manage to combine both phonic and whole word methods in order to find out unknown words. Those who are taught phonetically, find a way of recognising whole words without building them up, and those who are given no phonic drill at all begin sounding out words and analysing them into syllables.

Surely then, the best method of teaching is that which helps on the child's own method of learning; i.e., by a combination of methods. The problem is that of discovering the moment to introduce fresh methods of attack. The time for phonic training appears to be when they need a tool for unlocking unknown words because they want to read more and still more without the hind-

rance of appealing for help to adults. There will be exceptional children who can certainly do without help from any systematised teaching of phonics, although a moderate amount of skill of this sort is useful even for them. The majority who have to be taught in large classes should not be left floundering about with a trial and error system of their own. It is the business of the teacher to select a sensible system which, far from being an end in itself, should be the means to an end; and that end is independent, intelligent reading on the part of the average and slow children. As in the beginning stages we insisted that the dull children must be given every sort of help in discriminating differences, it is necessary at this stage to give them the same help in seeing and using similarities; i.e., in applying a simple system of phonics to their own reading difficulties.

COMMON-SENSE TRAINING IN PHONETICS

Important points to remember.

1. That it is quite unnecessary and indeed wasteful to make children learn a complete phonetic system. Each teacher should select only what her class needs as an aid

to reading and remember that she is teaching them to use a tool.

2. That it only matters whether children can use their phonetic training as they read. There is a great deal of time and energy wasted in testing phonic knowledge which should be spent in actual reading, and in using such knowledge to read more and more intelligently.

3. That on no account should words be dragged into phonetic practice just to make up a phonic family. Teachers should resist all temptations to round off each group. If there are not enough sensible words to make up a group, it is better to teach the word in question on the word recognition principle.

4. That all phonic practice should be upon words which the children will meet in their story books. All others, if not used, will soon be forgotten and so the effort to learn them will be completely wasted.

A Suggested Method of Training.

1. First, the children have to be aware of the differences in sounds which make up words. The ear has to be trained to hear. Therefore, several short speech training periods can be devoted to such games as, "I hear with my little ear all the words ending with . . ." The

teacher is the first to give an ending or beginning and then leaders can be chosen from the class. Another variation is: "I hear with my little ear all the words which sound like , . ." Dull children and those who do not speak clearly themselves need a good deal more of this training before they can distinguish differences in word-sounds. Short lessons, twice daily are more effective than longer but less frequent lessons. If the children attend closely, they cannot concentrate for longer than ten minutes.

2. Follow this up with a lesson when the words are written. The teacher writes a word which the children can read and then asks them to find out which "word parts" together make up the whole. They may need a little help at first, but after a few minutes they will be eager to analyse any known words. If the *Activity Scheme* is in use, the following words can be recommended: letter (let-ter), morning (morn-ing), sister, bonfire, together (to-geth-er), butter, aeroplane, hammer, sitting, penny, Robin, and so on.

3. Take similar lessons with one syllable words. Now the children have to find the separate letter sounds and may need some examples explained. Be sure to use words which they can read. These are from the "First and Second Story Books" of the *Activity Reading Scheme*:

Jim (J-i-m), will (w-i-ll), doll, and, am, milk, red, black, big, dog, bag, etc.

4. Follow these lessons up with the introduction of the sounds of the consonants. Take them in groups of about 10 and give a few minutes' memory drill twice a day. As each group is introduced, practise word-building from them, using only those words which are normally used by children in their conversation. This practice should also be quite short.

EXAMPLE:

Group of Consonants

a, b, e, f, h, i, k, l, m, t

Word-Building

ball	ham	malt	milk
bell	mill	bat	fit
kill	fell	hat	mat
hill	fat	hit	him

5. Give each child a discarded phonic reading book or pages from such a book and let them play at building up simple words which they have not already met in their story books. They can ring round all the ones they can discover by building.

Words I know

am

an

and

at

Ann

bag

man

ran

a

PRACTICE IN PHONICS

Words I can find out

a

as

cat

bat

fat

bad

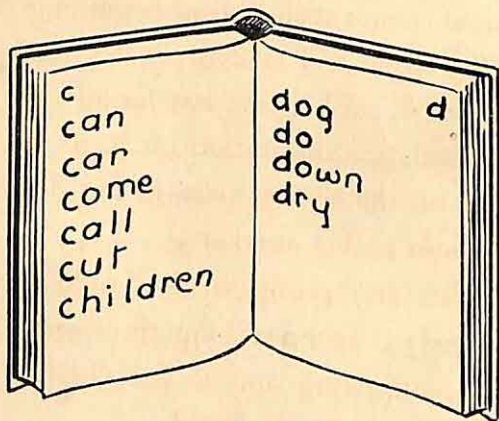
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REVERSE SIDE OF PRACTICE CARD

6. Introduce some easy individual work cards such as those provided by the *Activity Reading Scheme*. On one side of the card are lists of "Words I know" and at the end is the letter which has occurred in every word. The children read the words to themselves and then say the sound which occurs in each one. On the reverse side is a list of "Words I can find out." Each word con-



MY FIRST DICTIONARY

tains the letter introduced on the other side and a number of words which the child can find out, although they are new to him.

7. Side by side with this activity, comes "My First Dictionary." Some of the children will already have begun

to write English in a simple form (see page 37). They keep their own "Daily Diaries," or perhaps they are writing letters for the school post office, or they may be writing posters for their plays. There may be children who are capable of writing the Class Newspaper or who want to keep the Nature Calendar. These little dictionaries are made by the children; they design the covers, and head each page boldly with one of the letters of the alphabet.

When Susan cannot spell a word beginning with K, she finds the "K" page and takes it to her teacher to have the word inserted. When she has found out the words on her little card (see illustration on page 71) she writes them in order on the correct page of her dictionary after he has read them to her teacher.

Note: All class and group work should be brisk and there is no need to spend a long time on this work if each lesson is interesting and if the children are *doing* the learning in the ways suggested.

PHONOGRAMS

The next step depends on the "Third Reading Book." The teacher should scrutinise the book for the words which the children will need to build up. There is

absolutely no need to teach odd combinations for the sake of doing an exhaustive training in phonetics. For instance, words ending in "ight" can just be given to the children when they need them and as wholes.

There is, as yet, no evidence to help us to decide which are the best combinations to use. Some teachers like to teach "beginning families;" e.g., "ba" with the consonant preceding the vowel. Others prefer to use "end families;" e.g., "an" with the vowel preceding the consonant.

Whichever way is decided upon, the method of presentation most recommended is that of analysing known words and then building up new words. These new words should be those which will be found in the children's reading books.

In "My Sound and Story Book" this method is clearly illustrated. The children who are ready for this work, bring their new books and collect round the teacher. They begin by looking at the first picture and reading the sentences underneath. The words are well-known to them so they remark "it's easy." Some of them may realise why two letters are separated and underlined but no explanation is really needed until they have read the

play
may
say
day
ay

clay
lay
crayon
way

stay
away
to-day

top list of words on the following page. These, again, are familiar words, collected from "My First and Second Story Books." Each one contains the phonogram to be learnt. At the end of the list, the children will again find the phonogram separated and underlined. "What do you think the two letters sound?" asks the teacher. Unless they belong to the slower group, they will have already discovered. It is, however, the teacher's job to see that everyone in the group, clearly understands what, for instance, "ay" sounds before they proceed to apply the new knowledge to unknown words.

Next they practise the use of the phonogram by building up the second list of words, each one of which they will meet in the story which follows. It is worth spending time on these. Then the group can disperse and quickly prepare the story which follows before reading it aloud to the teacher. In small classes, she is able to listen while each one of the group reads to her but in large classes, the entire group is called together after an interval and each child takes his turn. The stories are planned to give plenty of opportunity for use of the newly learned combination, and as the child progresses through the book, he repeatedly meets with words which compel him to recall the combinations used in former stories.

Since the best way to be sure of remembering is to review frequently, it is a good plan to give the children the little practice cards for using phonograms (Words I Can Find Out, page 71) and to let them enter the newly built words in their First Dictionaries. Or, they can use the lists in their "Sound and Story Book" and enter the new words alphabetically in their dictionaries.

SUPPLEMENTARY READERS, SET 3

WHEN the children have successfully read "My Sound and Story Book," they have had a certain amount of practice in the habit of phonic analysis and word-building for the purpose of finding out words which they cannot otherwise recognise.

In order to give still further practice, and so enable them to continue the use of the new tool, it is important that a series of interesting short books of stories should now be available. There is no dearth of such books. Those written especially for a phonic training in reading can quite well be used. A large selection of different books is far better than whole sets of a few series. Each teacher will choose from those at her disposal and each child can keep some record of those he has read.

The Book Table becomes even more important for now the children can *read*, they are able to discriminate between interesting and dull books; between those they like and dislike. In a word, the Book Table can become the means of training taste in reading.

ALL SORTS OF STORIES

If the children are not hurried along too quickly to their fourth book, they should have gradually learned more and more details about words, yet, at the same time, they should begin to notice them less and less. A fluent adult reader rarely pauses longer than a second over a difficult word; he takes in the details in his stride and barely notices them in the recognition of the whole. The children should be growing towards this maturity if we give them enough simple, interesting material.

Book 4 of the *Activity Reading Scheme* is called "All Sorts of Stories," because it is a collection which contains both everyday stories and tales of magic. It is the first book of the series which deliberately aims to increase the vocabulary through reading. All teachers know, however, that no one set of books is sufficient for this purpose; words have to be met with hundreds

of times before speedy recognition and subsequent skill and delight in reading are secured and before reading can be said to increase vocabulary.

"All Sorts of Stories" is but an introduction to the dozens of books from which the children will read, and read again. Independent reading must be encouraged by way of the book table, the school library, and through any material which interests children.

It is the business of the whole primary school to secure this sort of delight in reading, but the infant teacher has done her part if she studies the way children learn to read and then alters her methods from time to time until she finds the particular combination which will best keep the interest and pleasure in reading from the very beginnings to the stage when the children enter the Junior School.

APPENDIX I

SUGGESTIONS FOR A READING SCHEME

AGE	TEACHER'S AIMS	METHODS	MATERIALS
Through- out Infant School.	1. To unfold the delights of reading. 2. To keep up the pleasure and interest of the children through the various stages of learning. 3. To do everything possible to insure that children read for the meaning.	1. Freedom and leisure for the children to use books. 2. Lessons and individual exercises based on children's interests, vocabulary and way of learning. 3. Special consideration of the difficulties of the slower children and definite efforts to give them confidence.	1. Well-planned, attractive book corners in all classes and appropriate books. 2. Reading material which holds meaning for children. 3. Carefully chosen story books and suitable games and exercises.

AGE	TEACHER'S AIMS	METHODS			MATERIALS
		CLASS	GROUP	INDIVIDUAL	
Under 5½ years	To provide pleasurable experiences of reading.	Reading of notices; Little Daily Newsheet; wall stories; watching teacher and listening as she reads aloud.		Free use of book corner and writing table.	For Notices and Labels.—White card, Indian ink, wide parcel pen. For Newsheet.—Large sheets of plain, stout paper or wall paper. Thick pencil. For Wall Stories.—Stout cartridge paper, illustrations, Indian ink. For Writing Table.—Thick black and coloured pencils, plain paper, wooden letters, metal insets, boards and chalks.
Between 5 and 6 years	To see that : 1. All children understand what it means "to read." 2. They all realise the significance of separate words.	Reading and finding words on Daily Newsheet, wall story and notices.	Naming games. Games with Flash Cards.	Using book corner and writing table.	For Flash Cards and Naming Cards.—Strong white cardboard. Indian ink and wide parcel pen.

LEARNING TO READ

AGE	TEACHER'S AIMS	METHODS			MATERIALS
		CLASS	GROUP	INDIVIDUAL	
Between 5½ and 6½ years.	To teach recognition of words to be used in the first story book with special emphasis on dissimilarities.	Learning to: 1. Recognise phrases on wall story. 2. Writing own story book from wall posters.	Flash Card drill with: Sets of utility and key words. 2. Visual memory practice with Flash Cards or Newsheet.	1. Matching exercises. 2. Work book. 3. Keeping Record Card.	<i>For Wall Story.</i> —Strong cartridge paper, illustrations, Indian ink, wide parcel pen. <i>For Matching Cards</i> —Envelopes, small pictures, Indian ink, narrow parcel pen. <i>Record Cards.</i> —Use postcards.
Between 6 and 7 years.	To introduce first story books and to provide opportunities: 1. For daily practice at the stage at which each child has reached. 2. To give help in finding out words. 3. To keep reading pleasurable and interesting.		Introduction of first books. Daily practice for Groups 2 and 3. Lesson for Group 4.	1. Daily practice for Group 1. 2. Keeping Record Cards. 3. Supplementary reading.	<i>For Book Marker.</i> —Cardboard, 4 ins. by 1 in. <i>For Book Covers.</i> —Decorative coloured covers of strong paper or thin card. <i>Record Cards.</i> —First and second story books. Supplementary readers.

AGE	TEACHER'S AIMS	METHODS		MATERIALS
		CLASS	GROUP	INDIVIDUAL
Between 6½ and 7½ years.	To provide a tool which will unlock difficult words; i.e. a sensible phonetic training based on words the children know and will want to know. This involves special emphasis on word similarities.	1. Lessons in <i>learning</i> letter and syllable sounds. 2. Lessons which help children to <i>discover</i> how to analyse words. 3. Learning consonant sounds and discovering how to build words.	Story book reading for slower Groups. <i>Note:</i> Exclude from class lessons if matter seems beyond them, but word analysis and building may definitely help some slow children. There can be no hard and fast rule.	1. Building up words from miscellaneuous pages. 2. Making first dictionaries. 3. Recording new words in dictionaries. 4. Working cards, "Words I can find out." 5. Keeping own diaries or class Newsheet. 6. Using book corner.
Between 7 and 8 years.	To provide plenty of simple, interesting books and to allow each child: 1. To read at own rate, helping each over special difficulties. 2. To enlarge vocabulary by judicious choice of books and discussion.	1. Continuation of phonetic training if necessary. 2. Occasional reading aloud by small group (in form of serial story). 3. Discussion of favourite stories read by members of the class. 4. Reading aloud by teacher with discussion of new words and phrases.	1. Daily practice from story books for slower Groups. 2. Possibly, phonetic training for slower Groups.	Discarded books. <i>For Dictionaries.</i>—Neutral coloured paper for covers. Sheets of lined or unlined paper. <i>For Exercises.</i>—Cards, Indian ink. Books and reading material suitable for age and interests.

APPENDIX II

VERY SIMPLE BOOKS FOR THE BOOK CORNER

The Child's Picture Readers (Books 1 and 2)	<i>A. Monteith</i>	University of London Press
The John and Mary Readers (Book 1)	<i>E. Ashley</i>	Schofield & Sims
The Mac and Tosh Readers	<i>E. Ashley</i>	Schofield & Sims
The Phrase and Sen- tence Book	.	E. J. Arnold & Son
The Commands Picture Book	.	E. J. Arnold & Son
Animals and Birds Picture Book	.	E. J. Arnold & Son
The Word Picture Books (Nos. 1 and 2)	.	E. J. Arnold & Son
The Judy Books	.	Pitman & Sons

APPENDIX III

HELPFUL BOOKS FOR THE TEACHER

The Improvement of Reading	<i>A. I. Gates</i>	. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.
The Psychology and Teaching of Reading	<i>Dolch</i>	. Ginn & Co.
Education of the Slow-learning Child	<i>C. P. Ingram</i>	. Harrap
The Children We Teach	<i>Susan Isaacs</i>	. University of London Press
Modern Education of Young Children	<i>N. Catty (Ed.)</i>	Methuen & Co., Ltd.
Play in the Infants' School	<i>E. R. Boyce</i>	. Methuen & Co., Ltd.
Infant School Activities	<i>E. R. Boyce</i>	. Nisbet & Son, Ltd.

APPENDIX IV

THE ACTIVITY READING SCHEME

BY E. R. BOYCE

The dawn of reading interests.—The material for this stage includes TEN WALL PICTURES and TEN GROUPS OF TEN FLASH CARDS.

Individual progress.—The material includes WORD-MATCHING GAMES and "MY FIRST WORK BOOK."

A first reading book.—"MY FIRST STORY BOOK."

Supplementary reading.—Nos. I—IV of "THE LITTLE BOOKS," which contain only the vocabulary of "My First Story Book."

A second series of preparatory material leads the children to "MY SECOND STORY BOOK," and is followed by Nos. V—X of "THE LITTLE BOOKS."

The material includes TEN WALL PICTURES (Set II); FLASH CARDS in ten groups; WORD-MATCHING GAMES; "MY SECOND WORK BOOK" and "MY SECOND STORY BOOK."

A common-sense training in phonetics.—PRACTICE CARDS (for individual work).

The third reader.—"MY SOUND AND STORY BOOK," with common-sense phonic drill.

The fourth reader.—"ALL SORTS OF STORIES."

THE ACTIVITY READING SCHEME

SET I

- WALL PICTURES.** Nos. 1-10, in full colour, size 13"×8", on specially designed mounts 14"×13". Including 20 double-sided Sentence Slips which drop into slots below the pictures . . . 10s. 6d.
- FLASH CARDS.** Groups 1-10, ten cards per Group, each 10"×5". . . 6s.
- WORD MATCHING GAMES, Set A.** Six cards with coloured pictures, and Six Matching Cards in envelope affixed to each . . . 2s. 6d.
- MY FIRST WORK BOOK.** 32pp., with outline drawings, blank-backed and perforated . . . 1s.
- MY FIRST STORY BOOK.** (Primer.) 32 pp. Illustrated in colour. Paper, 6d. Cloth-lined, 7d.
- LITTLE BOOKS 1-4.** 8pp. Illustrated . . . each 1½d.

SET II

- WALL PICTURES.** Nos. 11-20, with Sentence Slips . . . 10s. 6d.
- FLASH CARDS.** Groups 11-20 . . . 6s.
- WORD MATCHING GAMES, Set B.** Six cards in colour, with eight Matching Cards for each . . . 2s. 6d.
- MY SECOND WORK BOOK.** 32pp. . . 1s.
- MY SECOND STORY BOOK.** (Second Reader.) 64pp. Illustrated in colour. Paper, 9d. Cloth-lined, 10d.
- LITTLE BOOKS 5-10.** 16pp. Illustrated . . . each 2½d.

SET III

- PRACTICE CARDS Set I.** 24 Cards . . . 6d.
- PRACTICE CARDS Set II.** 24 Cards . . . 6d.
- MY SOUND AND STORY BOOK.** (Third Reader.) 112pp. Illustrated in colour . . . Paper, 9d. Cloth-lined, 10d.

SET IV

- ALL SORTS OF STORIES.** (Fourth Reader.) 128pp. Illustrated in colour. Paper, 10d. Cloth-lined, 11d.

TEACHER'S BOOK

- LEARNING TO READ** . . . Paper, 9d.